

WORK-LIFE BALANCE, BREAKS, AND IDENTITY SALIENCE IN INDIAN EXPATRIATES

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Globalization has increased opportunities for people to work as expatriates in organizations outside of a person's home country. Within the United States of America (USA), the ongoing domestic shortage of software-related skills has resulted in large-scale hiring of skilled and foreign-born employees into the information technology (IT) industry. India has been the dominant source of such expatriates, and these individuals face significant challenges and potential conflicts associated with their complicated work and nonwork roles as expatriates.

Based on existing theory and empirical work in this area, we hypothesized that perceptions of work-nonwork role relationship quality partially mediate the relationship between perceived work-related stress and perceived well-being for these expatriates (H1). Further, we considered how the effects of work stress is conditioned by two individual differences likely to influence or affect perceptual processes and behavioral reactions to work stressors. We expected that more work-salient individuals would experience a weaker relationship between work-related stressors, work-nonwork role relationship quality, and general well-being, while the opposite was expected for workers who are more nonwork salient (H2). We also anticipated that workers who regularly engage in brief and periodic breaks during the workday (e.g., lunch and minibreaks) would experience weaker relationships between work-related stressors, work-nonwork role relationship quality, and general well-being than workers who do not regularly take breaks while at work (H3).

Internet survey data were gathered from 416 Indian IT expatriates working in the USA, using established and reliable measures of the core variables at the heart of this study. Results of a series of conditional process analyses (using the PROCESS analytical tool) supported H1, and partially supported H2 and H3. Specifically, the relationship between workload and well-being was conditioned (mediated) by the quality of expatriates' work-nonwork role relationships and the nature of these effects was further conditioned (moderated) by expatriates work/nonwork identity salience and typical break-taking behavior. Overall, these results support our expectations that workers' experience with stress at work to their general well-being, through the perceived quality of their work-nonwork role relationship. Through this study, we also provide some of the first evidence that behaviors in the workplace (break-taking) and our underlying work/nonwork identity salience may help to explain how and why work experiences affect different workers in different ways.

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